DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 337 502 TM 017 377

AUTHOR Clements, Barbara S.
TITLE Reporting High-School Graduation and Other High School Completer Statistics: Recommendations Developed by the Education Data Improvement Project Task Force on High School Completion Rates.
INSTITUTION Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY National Center for Education Statistics (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Mar 90
CONTRACT NCES-RS880140
NOTE 36p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Cohort Analysis; *Data Collection; Definitions; High School Equivalency Programs; *High School Graduates; High Schools; *Longitudinal Studies; *Nontraditional Students; *Research Methodology; Research Problems; Sample Size; School Statistics
IDENTIFIERS Common Core of Data Program; Educational Indicators; *Educational Information

ABSTRACT

One of the most frequently used indicators of the success of American schools is the graduation rate. There is a need, however, to track categories of school completers other than traditional diploma recipients; school reforms and stricter graduation requirements may influence how people attain a secondary education. This report contains recommendations for improving the quality of data on school completion. These recommendations result from the work of the Task Force on High School Completion Rates (TFHSCR), and they take into account problems associated with current data collection and reporting procedures. Recommendations to enable a more accurate indication of what happens to a ninth-grade cohort 4 years later include the following: (1) reporting four categories of annual completion rates: traditional and non-traditional diploma recipients, other certificate/credential recipients, and those who pass the Tests of General Educational Development; (2) selection of various grade levels to determine the most appropriate cohort; (3) collection of data on non-traditional high school programs; and (4) collection of long-term completion rates through age 24 years. Appendices list member agencies and personnel of the TFHSCR, definitions of Common Core of Data completer categories, and graduate and completer data in the Common Core of Data in 1988-89 in table form. (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

TM

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

REPORTING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND OTHER HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETER STATISTICS

ED337502

Recommendations developed by the
Education Data Improvement Project
Task Force on High School Completion Rates

Written by

Barbara S. Clements
Education Data Improvement Project

Under Contract to:
National Center for Education Statistics
U.S. Department of Education
Contract No. RS880140

March 1990

Council of Chief State School Officers
State Education Assessment Center
400 North Capitol Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 624-7700

TM017377

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REPORTING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND OTHER HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION STATISTICS

INTRODUCTION

One of the most frequently used indicators of the success of the American schools is the graduation rate. According to figures from the U.S. Department of Education, the percentage of American 17-year-olds with a high school diploma has grown from 6.4 percent in 1900 to a peak of 76.9 percent in 1969-70. Over the last six years, the national public school graduation rate has remained steady at about 70-72 percent. This percentage is based on the number of regular high school diplomas awarded by public schools each year, with the statistics compared to ninth grade membership figures for the same age group collected four years earlier.

An assumption frequently made with these figures is that if students did not receive a regular high school diploma after four years, they must have dropped out of school. There are, however, students who complete alternative secondary programs or receive a certificate for completion of a secondary program who are not included in these figures. As a result, the current graduation rates underestimate the number of students who stay in school and complete a secondary education. In addition, these figures overestimate the number of students who drop out of school.

One of the national education goals developed by the President and the National Governors' Association calls for increasing the percentage of students graduating from high school to at least ninety percent by the year 2000. Similarly, the Council of Chief State

School Officers stressed that high school graduation for virtually all students is an imperative for America's 21st century. In order to assess the nation's success at meeting these goals, there must be a more accurate assessment of how many students complete a secondary education programs than currently exists.

There is a need to track the categories of school completers other than just the regular high school diploma recipients, not only because they are completers (as opposed to dropouts), but also because the public needs to be aware of the impact of raising graduation requirements and school reforms on how people receive a secondary education. In addition, there must be a greater commitment by states and the federal government to the collection of more comparable and complete statistics on school completion. This report contains recommendations for improving the quality of data on school completion.

BACKGROUND

Since 1985, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has been working with states and the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to improve the quality, comprehensiveness, and timeliness of data reported on public education. Each year, states report data on public school membership, graduates, staff, revenues and expenditures in a set of surveys called the Common Core of Data. These data are reported to the nation in publications such as The Condition of Education, the Digest of Education Statistics, and the State Education Performance Chart, also known as the Secretary's "Wall Chart."

From 1985 through 1988, the CCSSO Education Data Improvement Project focused

its attention on developing a consensus among the states and the federal government and making recommendations on what data are needed about public schools, what definitions should be used to collect the data, and how the data should be reported. As a result of this project, the comparability and completeness of data that states are reporting have increased, making inter-state comparisons more meaningful.

In the second phase of the Project, areas where states still cannot provide complete or comparable data are being documented and technical assistance is being provided to help states provide better quality data. One result of this new project phase is the identification of additional issues in need of consideration.

One of these issues is the collection and reporting of high school graduation rates. State education agencies are asked to report in the annual NCES Common Core of Data the number of Regular Diploma Recipients, Other Diploma Recipients, Other High School Completers, and High School Equivalency Recipients for the previous school year. States are asked to report these data for each local education agency and for the state as a whole. The Project found that states vary in who is included in these categories, particularly who is included in the category of Regular Diploma Recipients.

Discrepancies in the reporting of graduation data are important. State graduation rates are computed using the number of Regular Diploma Recipients reported by states in the Common Core of Data. These rates are reported in the "Wall Chart." An assumption made in reporting graduation rates is that one can evaluate the success of the high school experience of a cohort of students in part by determining how many ninth grade students graduate from high school four years later. Generally, this is operationalized by dividing for

each state the number of Regular Diploma Recipients by the number of ninth grade students in membership in the state four years earlier. Since the graduation rate is used to compare and assess the success of state school systems, data categories must be specifically defined, and all states must report data according to the definitions. States have specific policies, however, which affect how they classify school completers, and these policies must be considered in developing or refining definitions and reporting procedures.

The Education Data Improvement Project convened a task force of persons representing state and local education agencies, the Department of Education, the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Southern Regional Education Board and the American Council on Education to consider the problems associated with completer categories reported by states in the Common Core of Data and to develop recommendations for improving the reporting of these data. (Appendix A includes a list of Task Force members.) At the first meeting on December 19, 1989, the Task Force discussed issues associated with the accuracy, comparability and completeness of data that are currently reported. Task Force members expressed concerns about the use of a single graduation rate, as it is currently reported, as the only indicator of school completion. In addition, the Task Force discussed the reporting of other categories such as persons receiving a high school credential after passing the General Educational Development (GED) Tests and persons who complete school through alternative programs or after several years.

Task Force members came together again in two groups to consider two ways of addressing the completion rate issue. On January 9, 1990, a sub-group of Task Force

members met to discuss current approaches to the measurement of school completers (including those of a cohort who seem to finish about the time regular high school graduates finish). This meeting focused on definitions of mutually exclusive categories of school completers and recommendations for computing and reporting graduation statistics. On January 12, 1990, another group of Task Force members met to discuss what types of statistics might be useful to describe eventual high school completers (those who ultimately finish, but possibly several years after their ninth grade cohort).

In the following sections, the problems associated with the current procedures to collect and report high school graduation and other completer data are discussed. Recommendations are then presented for improving the collection of school completion data which were developed by the Task Force on High School Completion Rates.

CURRENT COMPUTATION OF GRADUATION RATES

Each year a graduation rate is computed by the U.S. Department of Education for each state and listed in publications such as the "Wall Chart." Each state's graduation rate is computed by dividing the number of Regular Diploma Recipients (reported in the Common Core of Data) by the number of students included in the ninth grade count reported four years before in the Common Core of Data. When reported in the "Wall Chart," these rates are adjusted for inter-state migration rates (based on Census data) and for in-school students served in non-graded situations.

Variations have been found in the definitions used by states to collect data which are needed to report these rates. Information on definitions of completer categories currently

used is available for 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Thirteen states report only one category of completers in the Common Core of Data: Regular Diploma Recipients. Sixteen states and the District of Columbia report just two completer figures: Regular School Diploma Recipients and High School Equivalency Recipients (probably credential recipients who passed the GED Tests). For most of these states, only regular high school diplomas are given; no other type of certificate is awarded (other than an equivalency diploma or certificate based on passing the GED Tests). Therefore, if a student stays in school but does not complete the required Carnegie units or state testing requirements, then that student does not receive any diploma or certificate. In some states, all special education students who complete the requirements of their Individualized Education Program receive the same type of diploma as students who complete a regular high school program, even if the requirements are different. The result of these state policies is that the Regular Diploma Recipients count may be larger for states who give all completers identical diplomas and lower for states that give certificates of completion or attendance to special education students and students that do not meet all state requirements for a regular diploma.

The other states and outlying areas provide data in one or both of the other requested categories. These states may be under-representing their school completers when compared to states with the reporting practices described above.

In addition to the differences that exist because of the use of certain categories, states vary in the types of completers they put in each category. These variations represent different interpretations of the category definitions provided by the National Center for

Education Statistics. (Current definitions for the four Common Core of Data completer categories are included in Appendix B.) Variations exist in each of the four completer categories in the inclusion or exclusion of groups such as special education students, adult education completers, recipients of certificates of completion or attendance and recipients of credentials based on passing the GED Tests. In Appendix C, there is a summary table on how completer data are reported in the Common Core of Data.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE COMPUTATION OF COMPLETION RATES

At the meeting of the first sub-group of the Task Force, participants focused their attention on two major questions: 1) What is the appropriate cohort for reporting graduation rates? and 2) What happens to students at the end of what is the expected secondary school experience? Once these two questions were explored, the Task Force developed recommendations for collecting more complete and comparable completion counts to be used in the computation of annual rates. A discussion of these two questions follows.

What is the appropriate cohort for reporting graduation rates?

A cohort is a group of people who share a common experience over a common period of time. For graduation rates, a cohort could consist of people born in a particular calendar year or who were in a particular grade during a certain school year. Defining the cohort group for graduation rates, however, presents some problems.

There are problems in assuming that the appropriate cohort for computing

graduation rates is people who are 18 years of age, because children may enter school between the ages of 5 and 7, or some students may be held back or skip one or more grades at one or more points in their school careers. However, it usually is assumed that the vast majority of students by age 19 will have completed their high school education.

For the most part, graduation rates currently are computed using the number of students who were in the ninth grade four years earlier as the population of potential graduates or the cohort group. It is assumed that students who enter high school in a particular school district within a particular state (usually in the ninth grade, although high schools vary in the range of grades included) will complete a diploma program within the expected four years in the same school or school district. We know, however, that some students leave school early to enter postsecondary programs or alternative programs. We also know that there may be a "bulge" in the number of students at the seventh, eighth, ninth, or tenth grade levels, depending on the state's policies for promotion or retention. The use of one of these grade levels as a cohort group may have an adverse affect on the graduation rates for some states.

For the purpose of determining the success of the secondary school experience, the ideal graduation rate should probably be computed using students who were first time ninth graders in the base year and the number of these students who actually complete a high school diploma program four years later. Currently, however, most states' record keeping systems are not capable of tracking individual students through their school years; hence, states cannot report who completed kindergarten and grades one through twelve in the expected number of years. Also, no tracking is done across state lines.

The Task Force agreed that for now, ninth grade membership is the most reliable estimate for the number of students expected to finish high school four years later.

What happens to students at the end of what is the expected secondary school experience?

There are quite a few possible outcomes for students who were in the ninth grade four years ago. Students who successfully complete coursework and other state performance requirements receive a high school diploma either on time or early. Students who do not meet all of the state's requirements may 1) stay in school to take additional coursework either in traditional or non-traditional programs, 2) receive a certificate recognizing that they have stayed in school, but have not met all requirements for the diploma, or 3) drop out of school. In addition, some percentage of students either die or become physically incapacitated, thus making completion on time impossible.

Students who drop out of school may pass the General Educational Development (GED) Tests and receive a state-endorsed credential (diploma or certificate). Other dropouts may enter alternative educational programs that offer more flexibility or special assistance leading to the completion of state requirements for a high school diploma. While these possibilities exist for persons of all ages, some proportion of school dropouts successfully complete the requirements for the high school diploma or other type of certificate within the time period and age range of their ninth grade classmates.

In order to assess the success of schools in terms of completion rates for a cohort of students, we have traditionally looked at how many students complete school and receive a state-endorsed diploma within the expected time. The inverse of this rate has been

incorrectly assumed to be the dropout rate. That is, if a student did not receive a regular high school diploma within the expected time, he or she must have been a dropout.

Many students stay in school, however, but do not receive regular high school diplomas, or they complete non-traditional programs and are not counted with regular high school diploma recipients. As a result, there may be additional completion rates that would give a better picture of how many students complete school (ergo they are not dropouts), yet who receive state recognition other than a regular high school diploma at the end of their programs. A specific group of students who fit this profile are students who are in special education programs with different requirements which do not result in receipt of a high school diploma.

Students who drop out but who pass the GED Tests and receive a high school credential, have, in a sense, a credential similar to those students who receive high school diplomas. If a dropout receives a credential based on the GED Tests at age 19 or younger, he or she has completed the secondary credential within the expected period of time. Because these people are not long out of school (most states require students to be sixteen or older to drop out), they most likely received from the schools much of the necessary education to pass the GED Tests. Most states require people to have dropped out of school and to be residents of the state in order to take the GED Tests. As a result, persons age 19 or younger who take the GED Tests probably attended the schools within the state of their residence. Therefore, persons aged 19 or younger who receive credentials based on the GED Tests could be considered a different type of secondary school completer attributable to that state.

Collection of data on these other categories of completers, as well as the collection of actual data on dropouts, would provide a more accurate indication of what happens to the ninth grade cohort four years later.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended Categories for Reporting Annual Completion Rates

The National Center for Education Statistics should collect data for four categories of completers annually for each state: Traditional High School Diploma Recipients, Non-Traditional High School Diploma Recipients, Other Certificate/Credential Recipients, and General Educational Development (GED) Credential Recipients. Definitions of these categories follow. These definitions represent refinements of the current definitions used to collect completer data in the Common Core of Data.

Traditional High School Diploma Recipients (currently Regular Diploma Recipients)

Count of graduates who receive a regular high school diploma upon completion of the Carnegie units and other performance requirements in a traditional high school program during the previous school year and subsequent summer school. Include in this category those students completing secondary programs in magnet or gifted programs (which may be called "alternative programs"). Do not include in this category persons in non-traditional programs, completers who receive a high school diploma after passing the GED Tests or persons completing Special Education programs that do not have the same requirements as regular high school programs.

Non-Traditional High School Diploma Recipients (currently Other Diploma Recipients)

Count of graduates who receive a high school diploma upon completion of the Carnegie units and other performance requirements of the state through a non-traditional or alternative program. Examples of these types of programs are Adult High School Diploma Programs, External High School Diploma Programs, and Home Study Programs. Include in this category only persons age 19 or younger (by the end of the summer of the school year reported). Do not include in this category completers who receive a diploma after passing the GED Tests or persons completing Special Education programs that do not have the same requirements as regular high school programs.

Other Certificate/Credential Recipients (currently Other Completers)

Count of persons receiving an exiting credential certifying high school attendance or completion of a secondary program without having completed all the state-mandated Carnegie units or testing requirements for a regular high school diploma. Include in this category persons completing Special Education programs that do not have the same requirements as regular high school programs, even if the credential they receive is called a diploma. Do not include in this category completers who receive a diploma or certificate after passing the GED Tests.

GED Credential Recipients (currently High School Equivalency Recipients)

Count of persons age 19 or younger who receive a high school diploma or certificate

upon completion of the GED Testing Requirements and any other state requirements for high school equivalency (such as residency or age requirements). All people who receive credentials based on passing the GED Tests should be included in this category.

The American Council on Education (ACE) has begun collecting GED Credential Recipients by age group by state for each calendar year. The National Center for Education Statistics may be able to drop this data element and obtain this information from ACE in the future, thus reducing the repetitious reporting. However, for the time being, this data element should remain in the Common Core of Data, so that high school equivalency programs not based on the GED Tests can be identified, if there are any.

Information on these four categories of completers would provide a more complete accounting of students within a particular cohort who are not dropouts. In addition, these categories would provide descriptive information on types of program completers which could be used for policy making decisions. For instance, the sum of the first two categories represents those who complete regular diploma requirements by both traditional and non-traditional means. The sum of the first three categories represents the number of students in a cohort who have remained in school for the expected time. In contrast, the fourth category represents a group of students who dropped out of school, but who were able to finish a high school equivalency credential within the expected time of graduation for their cohort.

Completers in the first, second and fourth categories may be grouped as an

indicator of all persons from a cohort receiving secondary school credentials, i.e., a high school diploma or a diploma or certificate received after passing the GED Tests. These people are eligible for jobs, the military (in some instances), or postsecondary programs requiring these credentials.

The Task Force retained the distinction between traditional and non-traditional program diploma recipients because it was believed to be useful for state policymakers to track changes in participation in these programs that may occur over time as states add additional requirements for graduation or as alternative programs are developed for dropout prevention or for special populations of students.

For the purpose of making state-by-state comparisons in reports such as the Wall Chart, the Department of Education should consider reporting three figures (in addition to the dropout statistic now being piloted). These three figures are High School Diploma Recipients (from both Traditional and Non-traditional Programs), Other Certificate/Credential Recipients, and GED Credential Recipients. Further, NCES should publish a report containing all four categories for all states along with information about the applicability of the four categories in the reporting by each state. We believe that these data together with the dropout rate, which we hope will be available for all states in a few years, will provide more accurate and adequate data for comparing states and for policy making purposes.

Recommendation Regarding the Cohort Group Used

The Task Force considered the limitations of using the ninth grade as the basis for

the graduation statistic cohort. There was a concern that some states have policies which cause many students to be held back in the ninth grade, thus causing a "bulge" in the number being used as the denominator for computing graduation rates. In addition, the Task Force discussed the likelihood that the bulge might be attributable to the influx of private school students, particularly from parochial schools. It appears from recent Common Core of Data surveys, that most of the states with the lowest graduation rates do appear to have a "bulge" in the number of students in the ninth grade. While the use of a ninth grade cohort appears to have problems, there are also limitations to the use of a tenth grade cohort, since it might mask the problem of dropouts prior to that time. The use of a seventh or eighth grade cohort would require greater tracking since many students change jurisdictions when they go from these grade levels to high school.

The Task Force recommends that NCES review the use of various grade levels as the cohort for computing graduation rates and consider information concerning retention patterns, migration, state graduation requirements and other related data. One possible alternative would be to use the average of grades eight through ten as the base. Another possibility discussed is use of a ninth grade cohort with only first time ninth graders. While this would provide a graduation rate based more closely on expected graduation than is currently done, the collection of these data would be more problematic.

Recommendation Regarding the Collection of Data on Non-Traditional High School Programs

The Task Force was unsure of the extent to which data are currently available on

different types of programs resulting in a Non-Traditional High School Diploma. One possibility is that some of these programs are not funded or monitored by the same state department as the elementary and secondary public school programs. As a result, summary statistics may not be available, although they would be useful for determining how students are obtaining their educational experiences, and how successful schools are at meeting the needs of all students.

The Task Force recommends that NCES explore this topic further to determine what types of non-traditional programs there are and how to count students who are successfully completing these programs within the expected time for their cohort. Other program offices within the U.S. Department of Education, such as the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and the Office of Adult and Vocational Education, should be able to help in identifying and developing definitions for non-traditional programs.

Recommendation Regarding the Collection of Long-term Completion Rates

Statistics reported by NCES in the report Dropout Rates in the United States: 1988 indicated that the "completion rate for 20- and 21-year-olds is considerably higher than for 18- and 19-year-olds" (p. 70). These data, obtained from the Bureau of the Census, suggest a returnee rate or late completion rate of approximately 13% of the cohort; that is, the proportion of completers age 18-19 in 1988 was 71.5%, while the proportion of completers age 20-21 was 84.8%. High School and Beyond data collected by NCES found that a large proportion of the dropouts from their sophomore cohort had completed high school within four years after their expected graduation date. "About 46 percent -- eight percent out of

the 17.3 percent of dropouts -- had earned a diploma or an equivalency certificate and another 12 percent of the dropouts (two percent of the cohort) were pursuing that goal at the time of the third follow-up" (NCES, p. 34). Similarly, the American Council on Education reports that more than half of the persons taking the GED Tests are age 24 or younger (in 1988, the percentage was 58.5%). After age 24, the percentage tested by age groups dropped off appreciably. These statistics point to the value of follow-up study of school completion categories to obtain eventual completion rates.

The Task Force sub-group that focused on long-term completion rates believed that there is policy making value to the collection of these data, particularly as we consider the preparation of our nation's workforce. Specifically, the Task Force members felt that statistics obtained through administrative records systems of various secondary and postsecondary programs would provide more descriptive data, in terms of how many students are finishing what kinds of public education programs, than the data currently collected by the Bureau of the Census in its Current Population Survey (CPS). CPS data are self-report data collected on a sample of people who report whether they have completed high school and whether they were in school over the past year.

The Task Force sub-group considered the issue of what cohort should be used for the purposes of a long-term analysis of completion rates. We discussed the use of a synthetic cohort that estimates eventual completion for a cohort based on a cross-sectional approach. Estimates for eventual completion of a cohort would be obtained by counting the number of persons through age 24 who completed a secondary program in a particular year. The assumption made is that the number of people in each age group who finish a secondary

education each year is approximately the same from year to year. The use of this methodology would enable data to be estimated for a cohort without having to track cohort members over a period of years. Task Force members agreed that eventual completion rates would be useful on a periodic basis, such as every five years. After considering the data which currently exist, the Task Force agreed to use age 24 as a reasonable cut-off for obtaining eventual completion data.

The Task Force therefore recommends that administrative record data be collected periodically to estimate eventual completion of persons in each state through age 24 in various secondary and postsecondary or alternative programs. Data should be obtained directly from the program offices in each state serving this population or through centralized data systems in states, if they exist. These data would be useful to policymakers in determining the ultimate success of various programs leading to adult secondary education credentials.

Following is a list of programs through which students older than school age can receive secondary credentials. This list may not be complete and these programs may not all exist in each state. The Task Force believes that more needs to be known about the number of people completing secondary credentials in these and other programs:

1. regular high school programs, many of which allow students to stay in school through age 21 (presumably these completers would be included in the regular high school graduation rate);
2. alternative education programs;
3. adult high school diploma programs;

4. external high school diploma programs (competency-based diploma programs that issue credentials based on generalized life-skill competencies;
5. home study and correspondence programs;
6. private school programs;
7. vocational programs resulting in a certificate or diploma;
8. post-secondary programs;
9. community college degree programs; and
10. programs which give high school credentials based on passing the GED Tests.

The use of a "synthetic cohort" methodology to estimate eventual high school completion rates of persons through age 24 completing these programs should be evaluated for its suitability and usefulness.

The Task Force further recommends that data be reported for each state on the number of eventual high school diploma recipients and other program completers who receive something other than a high school diploma (e.g., a certificate or other credential).

Finally, the Task Force noted that the completion of high school (or an equivalent secondary program) is not sufficient if, in fact, the completers do not have the literacy and numeracy skills required to live a productive life in an ever-changing world. While consideration of the quality of the schools was not the focus of this group, the Task Force recommends that the National Center for Education Statistics collect and report data on the assessment of literacy of the population as an indicator of quality schooling, recognizing that

the assessment of these skills must evolve as the world becomes more complex.

SUMMARY

One of the national education goals supported by the President, the National Governors' Association, and the Council of Chief State School Officers is to increase the percentage of students graduating from high school. Success in this endeavor, however, will require the collection of more complete and comparable data on high school graduates and other completers from state education agencies by the National Center for Education Statistics. Recommendations for obtaining better information about high school completers have been identified in this paper. A summary of the recommendations follows.

Recommendation 1: The National Center for Education Statistics should collect and report data on four categories of completers for each state: Traditional High School Diploma Recipients, Non-Traditional High School Diploma Recipients, Other Certificate/Credential Recipients, and GED Credential Recipients. Definitions for each category are specified in such a way that the groups should be mutually exclusive, yet include all relevant groups of completers. Recommendations are made for reporting these data in ways that would address several policy questions regarding school completion.

Recommendation 2: NCES should review the use of various grade levels as the cohort for computing graduation and other completion rates. Information on retention patterns, migration, state graduation requirements and other related data should be considered in determining the most appropriate cohort group.

Recommendation 3: Additional information needs to be collected by NCES

concerning the types of non-traditional programs which result in secondary credentials, and how many students are successfully completing these programs within the expected time for their cohort.

Recommendation 4: The National Center for Education Statistics should collect data periodically to estimate eventual completion by persons through age 24 in various secondary and postsecondary programs. State level data on eventual completion should be reported. In addition, NCES should collect and report data on the literacy skills of each state's population as an indicator of school quality.

REFERENCE

Frase, Mary J. (1989) Dropout Rates in the United States: 1988. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation (1989), State Education Performance Chart.

APPENDIX A

MEMBERS OF THE

TASK FORCE ON HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES

TASK FORCE ON HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES

Florida - Kathy Peck

Wisconsin - Don Russell

Arkansas - Archie Musselman

Detroit Public Schools - Linda Leddick

Miami/Dade County Schools - Ray Turner

American Council on Education - Janet Baldwin

Census Bureau - Robert Kominski

Southern Regional Education Board - Lynn Cornett

Office of Special Education Programs - Susan Thompson-Hoffman

Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation - Val Plisko

National Center for Education Statistics
- Mary Frase
- Lee Hoffman
- John Sietsema
- Marty Orland

Council of Chief State School Officers
- Barbara Clements
- Ramsay Selden
- Tom Tobin
- Rolf Blank

APPENDIX B

CURRENT DEFINITIONS OF

COMMON CORE OF DATA COMPLETER CATEGORIES

CURRENT DEFINITIONS OF

COMMON CORE OF DATA COMPLETER CATEGORIES

The following graduate/completer category definitions appear in the General Instructions section of Instructions for Completing The Nonfiscal Surveys of the Common Core of Data SY 1989-1990.

Regular Diploma Recipients

Count of graduates who received a regular diploma during the previous school year and subsequent summer school.

Other Diploma Recipients

Count of individuals who received a diploma from other than the regular school program during the previous school year and subsequent summer school.

High School Equivalency Recipients

Count of individuals in this jurisdiction age 19 or younger who have received a high school equivalency certificate during the previous school year and subsequent summer.

Other High School Completers

Count of individuals who have received a certificate of attendance or other certificate of completion in lieu of a diploma during the previous school year and subsequent summer school.

APPENDIX C

GRADUATE AND COMPLETER DATA

REPORTED IN THE COMMON CORE OF DATA IN 1988-89

GRADUATE AND COMPLETER DATA
REPORTED IN THE COMMON CORE OF DATA FOR 1988-89

	AL	AK	AZ	AR	CA	CO	CT	DE	DC	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN
REGULAR DIPLOMA															
Regular Graduates	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Special Education	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-
Adult Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Students Who Passed State Test	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OTHER DIPLOMA															
Only State Aggregate Figure	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	XX	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alternative Program Graduates	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-
Certificate of Completion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adult Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	X
GED Recipients	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
State Diploma (vs. District Diploma)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY															
Only State Aggregate Figure	X	-	X	-	X	(X)	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
GED Recipients Any Age	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
GED Recipients 19 and Younger	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Adult Education Completers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alternative Ed. Completers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Certificate of Completion	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OTHER COMPLETERS															
Only State Aggregate Figure	-		-	-	-	(X)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	(X)	X	X	-	X
Coursework Completers Without State Credentials	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-
Adult Education	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GED Recipients	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cert. of Completion/Attendance	-	(X)	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	(X)	-	X	-	-

(X) Data will be reported this way in 1989-90.
XX Delaware has an alternative education program that cuts across district lines.
** State reports a figure in this category, but we do not know who is included in this figure.

GRADUATE AND COMPLETER DATA
REPORTED IN THE COMMON CORE OF DATA FOR 1988-89

	IA	KS	KY	LA	ME	MD	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	MT	NE	NV	NH
REGULAR DIPLOMA															
Regular Graduates	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Special Education	X	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	-	X
Adult Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Students Who Passed State Test	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OTHER DIPLOMA															
Only State Aggregate Figure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alternative Program Graduates	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Certificate of Completion	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adult Education	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GED Recipients	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
State Diploma (vs. District Diploma)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY															
Only State Aggregate Figure	X	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	X	-	X	X	-	-	-
GED Recipients Any Age	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
GED Recipients 19 and Younger	-	-	-	-	(X)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(X)	-	-	-
Adult Education Completers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Alternative Ed. Completers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Certificate of Completion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
OTHER COMPLETERS															
Only State Aggregate Figure	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coursework Completers Without State Credentials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Adult Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GED Recipients	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cert. of Completion/Attendance	-	-	X	-	(X)	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

(X) Data will be reported this way in 1989-90.

** State reports a figure in this category, but we do not know who is included in this figure.

GRADUATE AND COMPLETER DATA
REPORTED IN THE COMMON CORE OF DATA FOR 1988-89

	NJ	NM	NY	NC	ND	OH	OK	OR	PA	RI	SC	SD	TN	TX	UT
REGULAR DIPLOMA															
Regular Graduates	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Special Education	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	-	X	X	X	-
Adult Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Students Who Passed State Test	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OTHER DIPLOMA															
Only State Aggregate Figure	-	-	-	-	-	XX	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alternative Program Graduates	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-
Certificate of Completion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adult Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GED Recipients	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
State Diploma (vs. District Diploma)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY															
Only State Aggregate Figure	X	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	-	X	X	(X)	-	-	-
GED Recipients Any Age	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
GED Recipients 19 and Younger	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adult Education Completers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alternative Ed. Completers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Certificate of Completion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OTHER COMPLETERS															
Only State Aggregate Figure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	**	-	-	-	-	(X)
Coursework Completers Without State Credentials	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	**	(X)	-	-	-	-
Adult Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-
GED Recipients	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**	-	-	-	-	-
Cert. of Completion/Attendance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	**	-	-	-	-	-

(X) Data will be reported this way in 1989-90.
XX Ohio includes some Adult Education completers in its Other Diploma count.
** State reports a figure in this category, but we do not know who is included in this figure.

GRADUATE AND COMPLETER DATA
REPORTED IN THE COMMON CORE OF DATA FOR 1988-89

	VT	VA	WA	WV	WI	WY	VirIsl	PuerRi
REGULAR DIPLOMA								
Regular Graduates	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Special Education	X	-	X	X	-	X	-	-
Adult Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Students Who Passed State Test	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OTHER DIPLOMA								
Only State Aggregate Figure	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-
Alternative Program Graduates	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Certificate of Completion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adult Education	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X
GED Recipients	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
State Diploma (vs. District Diploma)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY								
Only State Aggregate Figure	-	-	X	X	X	X	-	-
GED Recipients Any Age	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X
GED Recipients 19 and Younger	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adult Education Completers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alternative Ed. Completers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Certificate of Completion	-	-	-	-	(X)	-	-	-
OTHER COMPLETERS								
Only State Aggregate Figure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coursework Completers Without State Credentials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adult Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
GED Recipients	-	-	-	-	(X)	-	-	-
Homebound/Correspondence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cert. of Completion/Attendance	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-

(X) Data will be reported this way in 1989-90.

Mar-90